Third, this legislation doubles the personal income tax exemption to half of its original 1948 value, from $3,300 to $5,000. From 1948 to 1963 when this exemption was equivalent to $10,000 in today's inflation-adjusted dollars, America witnessed a ''marriage boom,'' a ''baby boom,'' and a decline in the divorce rate. There is evidence suggesting these outcomes were significantly advanced by Federal tax policy to strengthen families. Doubling the personal income tax exemption provides critical support to families with children, as well as elderly or disabled dependents.

Fourth, the Parents' Tax Relief Act eliminates the marriage tax penalty once and for all. This penalty discourages the sacred institution of marriage by unfairly taxing married couples filing jointly at a higher rate than two single individuals earning the same income. The 2001 tax cut law reduced this penalty by doubling the standard deduction for joint filers, and doubling the size of the 15 percent tax bracket for married couples. Unfortunately, these reforms will expire by 2010, along with the rest of the tax cuts enacted by Congress. The Parents' Tax Relief Act of 2007 will extend marriage tax relief to all tax brackets to prevent the government from discouraging marriage or forcing both parents into the workforce. It will also end the marriage penalty in the tax deduction for student loan interest, which currently limits married couples filing joint returns to a $2,500 deduction, even though $2,500 is the amount each spouse holding student debt could have claimed while single.

Fifth, this legislation will support parents who operate a home-based business. The bill establishes a standard home-office tax deduction to replace complicated IRS regulations that prevent many small business owners from deducting legitimate expenses. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that nine million of the 17.3 million small business in the United States are home-based, and 55 percent are operated by women. Many home businesses are started to provide a secondary income, which is very helpful to families with children.

Sixth, the Parents' Tax Relief Act of 2007 encourages telecommuting. It will create a Telecommuting Tax Credit allowing employers to deduct a portion of a telecommuting employee's wage for income tax purposes. It will also allow individuals to exclude from income the value of employer-provided computers and related equipment necessary for work from home, including critical related services such as broadband Internet connection. Telecommuting is one way mothers or fathers can stay at home with their children while still contributing to family income.

Finally, the Parents' Tax Relief Act protects the Social Security benefits of women or men who choose to stay at home with preschool children. When a parent leaves the workforce to be at home with a child, the family's finances may not only suffer, but career opportunities and future earnings potential may be diminished. Parents who stay at home to care for children during prime working years may also jeopardize their future Social Security benefits.

The Parents' Tax Relief Act of 2007 recognizes the realities parents face by allowing up to ten years of flexible Social Security employment credits for parents who stay at home to raise children age six and under. Public policy should safeguard stay-at-home parenting as valuable work that contributes to the character and security of our Nation.

These seven tax improvements will empower parents and strengthen families. The Federal Government must expand choices for parents with children. The Parents' Tax Relief Act of 2007 will address the needs of modern families, including those who want to stay at home with their children without decimating their family finances, and those who want to continue working and contributing to family income while spending more time with their children.

I urge my colleagues to support choices for families by cosponsoring the Parents' Tax Relief Act of 2007 today.

TRIBUTE TO BILL THOMAS

HON. MARION BERRY

OF ARKANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 8, 2007

Mr. BERRY. Madam Speaker, I rise here today to pay tribute to a dear friend, Bill Thomas. Bill was known throughout Northeast Arkansas for his unwavering dedication to his community. His gracious spirit and his friendship will be missed by all.

Bill Thomas was a successful, independent businessman in Wynne, Arkansas. Bill built a reputation as a leader in economic development through his work as president and executive director for the Cross County Economic Development Corporation. His initiatives, which revitalized Cross County were considered a model for the entire state of Arkansas.

Bill believed that in order for a community to flourish, active involvement was essential to success. As chairman of the Parks and Recreation Commission in Wynne, he helped develop a new baseball and softball facility. Bill was also on the board of directors for the Boys and Girls Club, Workforce Investment, the Crossroads Coalition, and was president-elect of the Arkansas Economic Developers. Often, Bill went above and beyond the call of duty because he was committed to a life of public service and making his community a better place.

Bill Thomas was born and raised in Cross County and graduated from Parkin High School, in 1970. He attended the University of Arkansas and was a member of Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity. Bill later earned his Bachelor of Science degree in business administration from the University of Mississippi, in 1975.

He is survived by his wife, LaRand Ozier, two sons, Charles Randolph Thomas of Fayetteville, William Brett Thomas of Wynne, and sister, Ann Dawes Thomas of Wynne. Bill was a member of the First United Methodist Church in Wynne. Bill's memory will continue to live through his legacy of civic service and the positive influence he had on so many lives, including my own.